

ARTS BUILD ONTARIO
Creative Spaces Case Study Series
Dundas Valley School of Art



This Creative Spaces Case Study Series is Supported by:

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Introduction

These in-depth case studies serve as a resource for arts and heritage organizations embarking on a capital project to learn from the successes and challenges of others in the sector.

In these case studies, we analyze the **why** (why they took on this capital project), the **what** (what were they building and creating), the **who** (who are they serving, who supported this project, who led this project and who they hired), the **how** (how was the project financially supported and what positions were created/how were they funded), and the **ongoing** (what happened after? How is the building maintained/operated? Is it sustainable? How is revenue generated?) behind each project.

We looked at a wide range of spaces from across the province with varying operational models, sizes, locations, project sizes and artistic disciplines. The case studies focus on each organization's process for completing their project; from the planning phase, to the building phase, to the operations and maintenance phase. Following the completion of all 19 case studies, a Best Practice Summary released on ABO's website, free for all to access.

The case study series is supported by the Learning Series, which is a collection of webinars and workshops that support ABO's core programs. Webinars that highlight the capital projects featured in the 2018-2020 case studies series are available on

the ABO website. Please check <https://www.artsbuildontario.ca/learning/webinars/> for more information.

The case study series is supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage and Canada Council for the Arts.

ArtsBuild Ontario

ArtsBuild Ontario is the only organization in Ontario dedicated to realizing long-term solutions to building, managing and financing the sustainable arts facilities needed in our communities.

ABO offers tools, resources and programs that support arts organizations with their creative space projects. ABO's core programs include Asset Planner for the Arts, the Creative Spaces Mentoring Network, and the Learning Series.

Dundas Valley School of Art

Interviewees

- Claire Lougheed, Executive Director
- Arthur Greenblatt, former Executive Director
- Tom Bontje, former Board Chair
- Frances Neufeld, former Board Member

Mission

Dundas Valley School of Art (DVSA) is an independent, not-for-profit art school serving the Hamilton and Burlington region. DVSA provides high quality, accessible and affordable visual arts education that encourages excellence and personal fulfillment for children, adults and those pursuing a career in the visual arts.

Historical Background

Dundas Valley School of Art was founded in 1964 by two visionary women, Marion Farnan and Emily Dutton, who recognized the need for professional-level art instruction in the region. The school grew rapidly, and in 1967 DVSA incorporated as a non-profit organization.

By 1970, the school has outgrown its small, rented premises on Melville Street and the board purchased the present building on Ogilvie Street. Built in 1836, the DVSA building has been the former home of a Wesleyan Ladies' College, Canada Screw

Works (later to become Stelco), an aircraft engine plant, and a munitions factory during World War II.

For the next three decades, the DVSA continued to grow. The Loft opens up as a teaching space, the number of classes on offer increase and the School's Annual Art Auction grows. The School adds a full-time program and an alumni association. In 2001 Arthur Greenblatt joins the School as Executive Director, and guides the DVSA through a number of needed repairs and improvements. In 2010, working in partnership with the Carnegie Gallery and Dundas Museum & Archives, the DVSA secures Infrastructure Stimulus Funding to significantly upgrade the School facility. In 2014, the DVSA celebrated its 50th Anniversary.

Project Summary

The DVSA's \$5 million capital project aimed to restore and renovate their heritage building. While looking to modernize the school to better address the needs of their students and faculty, the project team sought to maintain the industrial feel and historic charm of the building. Among the extensive list of items, the capital project included the addition of a new elevator reaching all floors, a new HVAC system and environmentally improved services as well as interior renovations that repositioned and improved classrooms, the gallery and lobby. With funding provided by the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund and matched by the Municipality of Hamilton,

this project was realized by champions within the DVSA and the community.

The “What”

What did the DVSA build?

The DVSA’s 2011 capital project included the restoration and enhancement of the school's three-storey heritage building. The \$5 million project provided students and staff with a more accessible, comfortable and energy efficiency learning environment.

The project included significant repurposing of the space through interior renovations that repositioned the gallery, administration offices, and several workspaces. The new floor plan supported the addition of a media centre and dark room for community use, along with the restoration of the school’s library. The project also addressed accessibility with the addition of a new elevator, and the repair of the stairways.

Upgrades were made to the mechanical and electrical systems that included a new HVAC system and repositioned inside lighting. The building also received additional washrooms on each floor and plumbing upgrades. Finally, the exterior of the building was enhanced with brickwork, sill and trim repair, as well as revised landscaping.

What was the project timeline?

The DVSA spent 2008-2009 planning their renovation project as well as grant writing and fundraising. The project build took place from Fall 2010 to Spring 2011. The facility reopened to the community with an art auction on April 30, 2011.

The “Why”

Why did the DVSA take on this capital project?

Built in 1836, the DVSA’s historic building has served as the former home of a Wesleyan Ladies’ College, Canada Screw Works, an aircraft engine plant, and a munitions factory during World War II. Considering it was not a purpose built facility, there were several physical limitations that affected operations, and areas that required expansion. The DVSA wanted their facility to better support classes and programming through improved climate control, as well as larger and more available classrooms and workspaces.

Health and safety standards were major incentives for this project. Prior to renovations, the three-storey building did not feature an elevator. This meant wheelchair users or individuals with limited mobility could not access the school beyond the first floor. The pottery program also required a significant investment and attention to address the health and safety issues surrounding glaze making, such as inhalation of clay dust. Renovations would ensure the facility could be properly set up

to address these health and safety concerns and establish updated and properly ventilated spaces for creation.

The DVSA aspired to provide their students and staff with a safe and accessible, modernized facility that would foster learning and promote creativity. They also wanted the building to maintain its industrial feel and historic charm. As many users have a profound heartfelt connection to the building, renovations would have to combine the old with the new and ensure new design elements complemented the building's legacy.

Why did the DVSA consult their users?

As the DVSA aspires to serve its students and staff, the project team wanted to ensure the needs of their users and community input was thoughtfully considered in the renovations. In addition to anecdotal reports from many students and parents over the years, the project team held extensive stakeholder consultations with faculty to determine the primary considerations for facility upgrades and resource allocation. They were asked to outline their vision for the school along with obstacles they were facing, and how renovations or additional resources could address these issues.

Focus groups were also held with local artists from Hamilton's James Street North. In two meetings hosted by the DVSA, attendees were asked to identify why the school was important to them, along with the value of the school within the greater

city of Hamilton. Suggestions for renovations and the corresponding benefits were also requested.

The “Who”

Who led the project within the Dundas Valley School of Art?

The renovation project was lead by the DVSA’s building committee. Composed of DVSA board members, staff and facility, the building committee included:

- Arthur Greenblatt, former Executive Director
- Board Members:
 - Bob Glass
 - John Farnan
 - Marian Farnan
 - Christine Group
 - Rudy Heinsel
 - Bob Wilkins
 - Marla Panco

Who was contracted for this project?

The building committee selected the project architect and contractor. The project architect, Trevor Garwood-Jones had been on the DVSA Board of Directors for over thirty years. The architectural firm, Garwood-Jones & Hanham Architects (now dissolved), was selected through a formal bidding process. The provided the lowest estimate and had extensive experience

working on other arts and culture facilities in Hamilton and across Ontario. The general contractors, Ira McDonald Construction Ltd., were also selected through a RFP process.

Who supported the project?

To a large extent, the main supporters of this project were students that identified deficiencies in the school and backed the need for a more efficient building. Faculty also strongly advocated for a purpose built space that would allow them to focus more on teaching and learning rather than finding workarounds for the spaces provided to them. They recognized that the gallery was an asset for students to showcase their work, as well as draw the community into the school. Having a purpose built gallery that had appropriate lighting as well as environmental conditions was tremendously important.

The project also included champions at the federal and municipal levels. Champions included, David Sweet, then Conservative Provincial Member of Parliament for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale, and Russ Powers, then City Councillor for Hamilton, Ontario. They advocated for the funding of this project and supported the project team throughout the application process. Both had personal connections to the DVSA and wanted to see the project succeed.

Who opposed the project?

The DVSA managed potential opposition to the project by keeping lines of communication open with the public, informing them about the project and the positive impact it would have on the community. Since the project was completed after Dundas amalgamated into the City of Hamilton, the DVSA made sure to articulate that the renovation project would support the Greater Hamilton Area. The DVSA also consulted with local artists early on in their project, to ensure the arts community was included, and plans for the DVSA aligned with community sentiment. As opposition from the community was in the minority, it did not impact project approval. The DVSA also faced a difficult neighbour that made the construction phase increasingly challenging. As the construction team was not granted permission to cross property lines, they had to be creative in construction procedures to accommodate their neighbour.

The “How”

How did the project go from concept to construction?

While contemplating renovations plans in 2008, the DVSA’s board chair began conversations with board members from the Carnegie Gallery and the Dundas Museum and Archives. All three organizations were looking for funding to support necessary facility upgrades to address accessibility limitations and improve operations in their heritage buildings. With advice

from their city councilor, MP and MPP, the three organizations formed the Dundas Arts Community Foundation (DACF) and submitted a joint application for \$11 million in funding from the 2009-2010 Federal Infrastructure Stimulus Fund. After learning that their joint application was not approved, the DVSA was given three days to re-submit an individual application. The DVSA's second application for \$2.45 million was ultimately successful. With \$2.45 million in matching funds provided by the City of Hamilton, the project was sparked into action.

[How was the construction plan formed?](#)

Project plans were determined by executive staff members, the building committee, the project architect and contractor. With only one year to complete the renovation project, drawings and construction plans were often determined a week or two before construction began. Plans and costs were changing on an almost daily basis and redesigns were swiftly passed to the contractors. Board members Bob Glass and John Farnan were on site everyday to manage construction and act as the School's representatives.

[How were operations impacted?](#)

With the facility closed for two terms to accommodate construction, the DVSA offered as many programs and courses as possible in temporary spaces across the city. In many cases, the team received free space from their local community. For instance, art history classes were held in the theatre of a

neighbouring senior living facility, on the condition that building residents could participate at no cost. Classes were hosted in a board member's house, as well as in municipally owned buildings. These temporary spaces enabled the DVSA to run approximately 40% of their classes during construction.

How were contingencies managed?

With only a year to complete renovations, remaining on schedule was critical. While no project is without any unexpected issues, two Board Members were constantly on site to address any questions or problems that arose with HVAC, flooring and gallery lighting. Despite only having one week to perform a fire inspection and have their occupancy permit approved, the DVSA opened with their spring auction as anticipated.

How was accessibility included in the project?

Physical accessibility was a top priority in the project, as the renovations were intended to make the space more accessible to its users. Accessibility was addressed through the installation of an elevator that can access all three storeys of the building, and accessible entrance as well as through the addition of accessible washrooms throughout the building.

How was energy efficiency and the environment incorporated?

Energy efficiency was a major component of the project. Full upgrades to the entire mechanical and electrical systems were

performed. This including removal of boiler system and installation of an efficient HVAC, lighting, and sprinkler system. The contractors also removed and replaced all windows, provided an EIFS finish, and built a new roof to bring building up to current codes.

How was the project funded?

This renovation project was financed by federal and municipal funding, as well as a Dundas based capital campaign. On May 20th, 2010, Infrastructure Canada announced \$2.45 million from the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund for the restoration of the DVSA. As this was a matching grant, the DVSA looked to their municipality for matching funds. Their required \$2.45 million was funded from the Hamilton Future Fund in the amount of \$1.40 million and the Unallocated Capital Reserve in the amount of \$1.05 million.

Additional funding was raised by the DVSA's fundraising committee, through considered community asks. Dundas residents were the primary donors to this campaign.

The fundraising committee included:

- Bob Crockford
- Doug Barber
- Frances Neufeld
- Bob Wilkins
- Mark Chamberlain

- Paul Lee-Chin
- Tom Van Zeiden
- Tom Bontje
- Fred Vermulen

The DVSA took out a line of credit of approximately \$250,000 to ensure cash was available when needed, and they could promptly pay their hired contractors. They maintained this line of credit during the first two years of opening to support operations.

The “Ongoing”

How has the project affected the DVSA’s financials?

Projecting financials for the first few years of operations was challenging for the DVSA. They recognized that by undergoing renovations for a couple semesters, they broke many of their students’ routines, and were uncertain if they would re-enrol. Predicting faculty costs was also a challenge as many faculty members found other jobs when construction began.

For the first two years of operations after renovations, the DVSA staff were focused on re-integrating the school into the community. They determined new programming and financial models to support operations. Recognizing that it can take up to five years for finances to level out, they took out a line of credit with a bank to maintain cash flow. Once the uncertainty of the first two years had settled and steps were taken towards

reintegrating the community through classes and programming, the DVSA's registrants began to return to pre-closure levels.

How will the DVSA be maintained?

Having completed their capital project almost a decade ago, the DVSA allocates an increasing amount of their annual budget to maintaining the facility. This budget line is evaluated every year, based on a 10 year capital forecast.

What lessons were learned?

Looking back on their capital project, the DVSA acknowledges that they would have benefited from a better public engagement strategy, directed at re-engaging the community once renovations were complete. Within capital projects, securing funding and managing construction can be all consuming for a project team. While planning for what comes after the renovation may not seem like an imminent priority, it is necessary for the ultimate success of a capital project. Similarly, the DVSA recognizes that providing faculty with more time to reorient themselves before classes began, would have resulted in a smoother transition when classes resumed.

Case Study Summary

Following their \$5 million capital project, The Dundas Valley School of Art has been renewed as modernized facility, better established to serve the needs of its users. By consciously addressing accessibility limitations, mechanical inefficiencies

and an imperfect floor plan, with input from students, faculty and the community, the project team fulfilled their project goals. The result of this capital project is an upgraded facility that enables the DVSA to carry out its mission of providing high quality, accessible and affordable visual arts education to an array of individuals throughout the community.

Resources

The following resources below have been provided by CAM as additional information for readers.

Website:

- [The Dundas Valley School of Art](#)

Documents:

- [Dundas Arts Community Foundation's \(DACF\) Grant Request for \\$2.45 Million \(FCS10070\(a\)\) \(City Wide\)](#)

News Release:

- [Dundas Valley School of Art Transformed – Government of Canada](#)